

# Disability and ADA 101

District of Columbia  
Office of Disability Rights



# Office of Disability Rights (ODR)

- The mission of the Office of Disability Rights (ODR) is to ensure that every program, service, benefit, and activity operated or funded by the District of Columbia is fully accessible to, and usable by, people with disabilities.
- ODR is responsible for oversight of the District's obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as amended, as well as other federal and local disability rights laws.

# Overview of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

- The Americans with Disabilities Act includes five Titles:
  - Title I: Employment
  - Title II: State and Local Government Programs, Services, and Activities
  - Title III: Private Entities/Places of Public Accommodation
  - Title IV: Telecommunications
  - Title V: Miscellaneous (Catchall Title; ADA in relation to other laws).
- The ADA was amended in 2008 (ADA Amendments Act)

# Expected outcomes of our session today

- ▶ Become familiar with the definition of disability under the ADA
- ▶ Become familiar with people-first language and proper disability etiquette
- ▶ Evaluate disability-related fears and misconceptions

# Disability Fact or Fiction: What Do We Know?



# Disability Fact or Fiction

A person with a disability wants to be treated equally to others in his or her workplace.

Answer: Fact. People with disabilities want to work and be treated equally to their co-workers.

# Disability Fact or Fiction

It is often inexpensive to hire a qualified person with a disability and give the person the tools needed to do his or her job.

Answer: Fact. Most reasonable accommodations cost less than \$500.

# Disability Fact or Fiction

People with disabilities are held to different standards at work than other individuals.

Answer: Fiction. Everyone in the same position is held to the same standards, because every person must be qualified to do the essential functions of his or her job, whether or not he or she has a disability.



# Disability Fact or Fiction

It does not matter to a person with a disability when you refer to him or her as “handicapped.”

Answer: Fiction. Person-first language is best. When in doubt about how to refer to an individual, ask.

# Disability Fact or Fiction

There is a difference between the words “Deaf” and “deaf.”

- ▶ Answer: Fact. “Deaf” is a cultural term, whereas “deaf” is a medical diagnosis.

# Disability Fact or Fiction

When you see a person with a disability struggling with a door or heavy object, it is a good idea to open the door or take the object for him or her.

Answer: Fiction. It is always good to **offer** help, but you should never assume someone needs it. Always ask first.

# Disability Fact or Fiction

When a person speaks slowly, you may assume that person has an intellectual disability.

Answer: Fiction. Making assumptions helps no one.

# Disability Fact or Fiction

Not all people who are blind read Braille.

Answer: Fact. According to the National Federation for the Blind, fewer than 10% of children are learning to read Braille. (2009)

# Disability Fact or Fiction

Some people who are blind wear dark glasses.

Why?

Answer: Some people who are low vision wear dark glasses, because their eyes are sensitive to light; others who are completely blind wear dark glasses, because they feel it facilitates better, more comfortable communication with people who are sighted. Still others wear glasses to avoid pollen or debris build-up in their eyes as they blink less frequently.

## Disability Fact or Fiction

When speaking with a Deaf person who has an interpreter, you should make eye contact with the interpreter.

Answer: Fiction. Make eye contact with the person who is Deaf. The interpreter is being used as a tool to help him/her communicate.

# Disability Fact or Fiction

All people who are Deaf read lips.

Answer: Fiction. Some do. Some don't.  
When in doubt, ask.



# Disability Fact or Fiction

All people who are Deaf can speak.

- ▶ Answer: Fiction. Some people who are Deaf can speak; some cannot. This depends on a number of factors, including the profundity of the hearing loss; when the person lost his/her hearing; whether the person was taught to speak; whether the person has a cochlear implant.
- ▶ Speakers who are Deaf often have a Deaf accent.

## Disability Fact or Fiction

A person who has cancer that is in remission has a disability.

Answer: Fact. A person with cancer cannot make healthy blood cells, which is an impairment substantially affecting many major life activities.

# Who Are People with Disabilities?

Do you have experience with individuals with disabilities?

- What are visible disabilities?
- What are invisible disabilities?

# Who Are People with Disabilities?

How does the ADA define disability?

- Three-pronged definition
  - Physical or Mental Impairment
  - Record of a Disability
  - Regarded As Having a Disability

## When Are They Covered by the ADA?

The District has responsibilities under 2 Titles of the ADA.

- Title I–Employment
- Title II– Accessibility of State and Local Government

To be covered under ADA Title I or II, a person with a disability must be qualified.

# What Does It Mean To Be Qualified?

- Title I– Qualified for the job and can perform Essential Functions of the job
- Title II– Qualified to participate in a particular program, service, or activity

# ADA Title I: What is a Reasonable Accommodation?

Any change or adjustment to the job, the work environment or the way work is customarily done which permits a **qualified applicant or employee with a disability** to perform the **essential functions**

A reasonable accommodation is anything necessary to help **this** employee with **this** disability do **this** job.

# ADA Title II: What is a Reasonable Modification?

- DC Government must reasonably modify any policy, practice or procedure when necessary to enable people with disabilities to participate
- A reasonable modification can be anything that makes it possible for **this** person with ***this*** disability to participate in **this** function



# Person-First Language

- Language does matter! When referring to a person with a disability, always put the person first.
- Examples: Person who is blind; person who is Deaf; Person with an intellectual disability

## The Golden Rule:

- If you are ever unsure of: acceptable language, acceptable etiquette, or anything else: It is appropriate to ask
- Making assumptions helps no one

# DC People-First Language Modernization Act

- ▶ Passed on July 11, 2006
  - Requires the use of respectful language when referring to people with disabilities in all new and revised District laws, regulations, rules, and publications and all internet publications.
  - People First Language” (PFL) puts the person before the disability, and describes what a person *has*, not who a person *is*. PFL uses phrases such as “person with a disability,” “individuals with disabilities,” and “children with disabilities.

# More Language Guidelines

Acceptable		Unacceptable
Person with a disability	NOT	Disabled or handicapped
Blind or low vision	NOT	Visually impaired
Deaf or Hard of Hearing	NOT	Hearing impaired
Wheelchair user	NOT	Wheelchair bound or confined to a wheelchair
Person with an intellectual disability	NOT	Mentally Retarded

# Basic Disability Etiquette

- Offering assistance
  - Okay to offer
  - Ask what type of assistance needed
  - Preferences are different among people with the same disability
  - Accept no
- Always direct communication to the person with a disability
  - If the person speaks slowly, let him/her finish the sentence.
- Make a mistake? Apologize, correct, learn and move on
- Treat adults as adults
- Relax!



# Questions?



Regarding the Definition of a Disability,  
Language Guidelines & Etiquette



# Thank you!



**For information and assistance, please contact the Office of Disability Rights**

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